



## **ALN Education Transformation: Supporting LA Implementation**

### **Evaluative Summary (Autumn 2021)**

#### **Context**

YGTCs was approached in May 2021 by BG LA to support with the realisation of the Regional Implementation (RI) Plan for Educational Transformation. It was agreed that the school would lead on Priority 2 for all mainstream settings across the LA. The school would work in close liaison with the LA Inclusion and ALN teams, the Lead for Early Years, the Lead for post-16 provision and the WG Additional Learning Needs Transformation Lead.

In July 2021, the new Education Minister announced a delay in the implementation of Phase 1, with the exception of those newly identified. As such, schools would be expected to commence their roll-over plans for mandated years from January 2022. However, given the preparations and plans to date, it was deemed that schools in BG could be in a position to initiate the process during Autumn 2021.

As part of its work, YGTCS planned to discuss with individual schools, their own status and plans. In order to secure the requirements of the RI plan, it was anticipated that all schools would engage fully in open, honest and non-judgemental discussions with regards to their current position for ALN transformation. The initial dialogue was to be held with the school's respective Headteacher (and/or SLT Lead where applicable) and ALNCO, together with YGTCS's Headteacher and ALNCO.

Following these initial discussions, YGTCS would seek to support schools to progress, in line with their set timelines, in order to realise fully the implementation plans for mandated years by Summer 2022. YGTCS would be very much led by the individual school's own requirements, and any support identified would reflect fully these bespoke needs as part of a co-constructed provision package.

Over the course of the first half term, nearly all maintained schools across the LA have engaged in a high-quality professional dialogue with YGTCS. This valuable engagement has provided a comprehensive snapshot of the position of our schools in relation to Priority 2 of the RI plan.



Priority 2 of the RI plan comprises six key objective areas. Each of these aspects were explored in detail through the initial school discussions and a summary of the findings, in relation to those schools met, is as outlined below.

## **Objective 1**

*'Ensure consistent PCP approaches involve children, young people and parents at every opportunity'*

PCP approaches across both primary and secondary schools are strong. All schools have adopted these principles and have implemented these practices within their settings. C-19 has presented challenges in the facilitation of the reviews, with most being held through virtual platforms over the past 18 months. Since the return in September 2021, there has been a shift back by many schools to the 'face-to face' processes. It was identified by many ALNCOs that, although the virtual aspect had allowed for continuity, the 'in-person' opportunities supported a greater involvement and a richer dialogue with the children, families and external agencies (as required).

In terms of facilitating the PCP reviews, most ALNCOs are currently undertaking this role within their settings, although there was a common appreciation for this aspect of the role to be delegated within settings, as appropriate. In light of this, there has been extensive professional learning provided by ALNCOs to either whole staff or identified staff with regards to the PCP process. Most ALNCOs confirmed that throughout this academic year, there would be opportunities provided for key staff to observe 'roll-modelled' PCP reviews and to share the facilitation. There was a clear need recognised for robust quality assurance processes, once the PCP facilitation had been delegated, to ensure a consistent and high-quality approach within settings.

## **Objective 2**

*'Ensure the school continues to develop and effective and efficient workforce ready for transformation'*

The time allocation for ALNCOs to fulfil their now statutory roles is highly variable, and ranges from non-teaching ALNCOs to those allocated one afternoon a week. The increasing strategic demands of the role was recognised by all leaders, but budgetary demands were identified as the key limiting factor in providing greater time. Despite not having the capacity to provide greater timetabled time allocations, all leaders were fully supportive of providing additional time, as needed, in response to ALNCO requests and key 'pinch-points' e.g. annual reviews.

In many primary settings, the ALNCO is part of the leadership team. In many secondary settings, the ALNCO role does not sit within the senior or extended leadership teams, although there is a direct line to leadership through line management arrangements.



In nearly all schools, initial Governor training has been delivered by the Headteacher and/or ALNCO. All schools identified ongoing training provision for Governors throughout the academic year. In a minority of schools, bespoke ALN governor sub-committees had been established at the start of the year to develop further understanding and knowledge.

All schools have identified calendared opportunities throughout the year to support the ongoing professional learning for their staff. Nearly all schools discussed how they have used the available time during the pandemic 'lock-down' periods to extend the skills and knowledge of the teaching assistant teams. Many schools identified key specialists within their teams focusing on areas such as literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. In the majority of schools, there were clear plans to further build and strengthen TA 'specialisms' to support both in-class and in small group/1:1 interventions.

All ALNCOs identified the significant training and input they had received to date through the LA forums, cluster meetings and work with Tracey Pead.

### **Objective 3**

*'Develop robust and consistent practices to inform early identification of need using a graduated response, resulting in effective provision mapping'*

All primary settings confirmed that the identification of need occurs during early years settings, with the exception of in-year transfers into later years. Any potential difficulties or problems are quickly recognised by the early years teams and shared with the leadership team and ALNCO. As such, appropriate provision and additional requests for support are timely, although there are significant identified challenges for schools when learners are awarded the 2-terms funding support in nursery but then progress to reception without ongoing allocated support.

At the secondary level, identified learner needs are discussed by all schools as part of the transition processes. Any 'newly-identified' within these settings are a result of in-year transfers.

Revised provision mapping, in line with the graduated response, is variable. Whilst there is no expected 'structure' e.g. columns/pyramids etc., at this point in the journey, there is a clear distinction between the quality and depth of information/strategies/processes. In around half of the schools, there are highly detailed and comprehensive approaches, not only detailing universal, targeted and specialised provisions, but also the clear expectations and accountability for all staff. Nearly all schools were able to articulate their targeted and specialised provisions, but a minority of schools had greater difficulty identifying clear provisions at a universal level.

In schools presenting high-quality practice, an array of ideas and approaches were identified. These included:



- ALN standing-item on staff meeting / HT reports to Governors
- Regular ALN scrutiny panels between HT/SLT and ALNCO to ensure effective learner provision
- Half-termly review meetings between ALNCO and individual class teachers (and associated TA where applicable) to review targets and have in-depth discussions on each identified learner.
- An 'eyes-wide open' consistent approach by all staff to ensure no learner missed
- ALNCO 'drop-in' sessions for staff to discuss specific learners and strategies
- Interventions case studies and directory of effective strategies provided as staff toolkits

#### **Objective 4**

*'Ensure teaching responds to the needs of individual learners; Develop effective systems for monitoring the progress and achievement of learners with ALN'*

All schools provided a comprehensive overview of their processes and practices for tracking and monitoring at a whole school level. Progress reviews by all were at least termly, and in the majority of cases, half termly. Deep data analysis ensures a full review of learner progress. In most schools, there is review meeting with the ALNCO and Headteacher/SLT to discuss the school's current position for ALN, with actions identified as needed. In the majority of schools, the ALN register is also reviewed at these 'snapshot' points.

In a few schools which have LA resources bases attached, the ALNCO has been timetabled to teach within this provision to ensure a full understanding of all learner needs across the school community.

In a few schools, ALN targets are included as part of the performance management process.

#### **Objective 5**

*'Develop arrangements for reviewing the effectiveness of interventions'*

There is an array of interventions being implemented across BG schools to support literacy, numeracy, social and emotional skills. Commonly identified interventions include: THRIVE, ELSA, Catch -up literacy and numeracy and COMIT. In a few schools, nurture and sensory rooms have been, or are in the process of, being developed to support pupil wellbeing further.

All schools have appropriate tracking and monitoring systems in place for their interventions. In nearly all cases, the impact of the interventions are reviewed on a half-termly basis, although flexibility in approach with this was noted should it become evident that an intervention was having limited impact at an earlier stage.



In all schools, teaching assistants play a pivotal role in planning, delivering and monitoring interventions. One school has made the innovative decision to move away from the traditional 'out-of classroom' small group intervention, moving instead to an in-class provision which is accessible and therefore 'universal' provision for all. Although this approach is in its infancy, the initial indications for this approach are very positive. Another approach, within a secondary setting, was to allocate teaching assistants to a faculty, rather than to a learner or class. In this approach, the faculty lead is accountable for the effective deployment of the teaching assistant within the subject area. In this school, the ALNCO is responsible for quality assuring the role of the teaching assistant within each faculty. Again, this novel and progressive idea is in its infancy but has real potential to be a highly effective strategy in supporting learners with ALN at a subject-specific level.

## **Objective 6**

*'Undertake moderation of IDPs to secure a consistency of approach and understanding by all'*

It was evident through discussion that this is the area of most concern within Priority 2. There is a global desire for greater opportunities to be provided for both cluster and BG - wide moderation. Whilst there is the full appreciation that every learner is an individual and as such will have different needs, a bank of WAGOLL IDPs would be invaluable to support ALNCOs and other key staff.

The number of IDPs across school settings was variable with one school reporting over 15 IDPs (ex of a resource base) whilst others reporting none. Whilst there is the full recognition that schools will have differing numbers of learners with ALN, further work is evidently needed to confidently determine whether a learner satisfies the full requirements for an IDP. A few schools proposed the idea of a 'requirements checklist' by way of supporting this as part of a IDP toolkit.

All schools identified the want and need to have IDPs checked and agreed in the early stages of educational transformation. This would help build confidence levels and secure a greater knowledge and understanding of the IDP requirements.

There is some confusion with regards to the IDPs for learners placed with LA maintained resource bases. Clarity is needed as to who is accountable for owning and maintaining the IDP in this case. Further clarity is also required with regards to the legislation with regards to IDPs and how the LA will support schools with this to avoid any resulting tribunal scenarios.

One school faces significant additional challenges due to its language status. As a Welsh medium school, the availability of translated documentation is extremely limited and as such, a significant amount of time is needed to undertake the translation requirements. Furthermore, the school in question, sits within both a LA and Welsh-medium provision



cluster, and as such can receive different and occasionally conflicting messages and information.

## **Moving forward**

Firstly, YGTCS would like to thank all participating schools for their valuable time and honest contributions during a period which has been extremely challenging for all.

The next half term will focus solely on IDPs and ensuring all concerns and requests for support are addressed. It is the ambition that by January 2022, all schools will have had the opportunity to engage in meaningful and worthwhile professional learning opportunities to build further confidence and knowledge with the IDP process and paperwork, with a view to confirming a BG consistent approach. This work will not only be of significant value to our own school settings but consistency in approach will be imperative to support learners with placement changes, in-year transfers and transition points.